

Also assisting in the post riot jubilation were Wilmington's white women, who had been supporting their husbands as they marched on nightly patrols and attended white supremacy meetings. The women, dressed in white gowns, had participated in the pre-election parades, prepared coffee for their block guards while on patrol, and maintained their support for their husbands in trying times. After troops began to arrive in the city, Wilmington's women became hostesses to out-of-town guard units and reporters. The most visible support by the white women of the city was the effort to feed the soldiers in town for the riot. Mrs. Thomas C. James, wife of the WLI's captain, oversaw the accommodations and provisions for the visiting military companies. Mrs. Edward Wootten wrote her son that she had been at the armory washing dishes while the military was in town and that the men ate in the armory yard at long tables as the ladies waited on them. She served food for three days, declaring "you never saw so many dishes to be washed and then they were needed for more men before we could get them washed."⁹⁷ Harry Hayden, writing decades later, praised the women who had remained at home without protection while their men were out in the fray and then stepped into action to feed the men: "[C]offee was prepared in 50-pound lard cans, buckwheat cakes with plenty of butter and stacked high on large platters, and fried ham and eggs and bacon and sausage were served the guardsmen in bountiful supply by the housewives."⁹⁸ On the day of the riot, the WLI was marched on patrols around town. J. D. Nutt's unit was taken by wagon to Frank Maunder's home at 624 North Fourth Street, where Mrs. Nutt "gave us

something good to eat."⁹⁹ In response to the activities of the city's women to feed the troops, the Maxton Guards posted a letter in the newspaper thanking the ladies for their "kind and considerate attention" to the needs of the men while in the city.¹⁰⁰ Afterward, one woman wrote to the *Star* to ask the paper to print the names of the men who "volunteered to preserve the peace on Thursday night." The paper responded that the compilation of such a list would be the equivalent of the white city directory.¹⁰¹

Repayment for Services Rendered

Waddell and the city's leaders were overwhelmed by men within the city requesting appointment to the police force, firefighting units, or other positions in return for their support of the campaign.¹⁰² Attempts were made to make good on the promises of hiring white laborers instead of blacks. There were, however, problems related to the exclusion of highly qualified African Americans in favor of lesser experienced whites who whites did not have the educational background or experience necessary to fill clerical public positions.¹⁰³ The *Wilmington Messenger* reminded city leaders of their promises to followers two days after the fighting ended when a writer observed in its pages that the "white laboring men in this city have not been treated fairly in the past." The article objected to hiring black laborers when

⁹⁷ Mrs. Wootten to Edward, November 21, 1898, Wootten Papers, University of North Carolina at Wilmington Library.

⁹⁸ Hayden, *WLI*, 105.

⁹⁹ "Minutes of the Association of the WLI," North Carolina Collection.

¹⁰⁰ *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 16, 1898.

¹⁰¹ *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 15, 1898.

¹⁰² "Quite a number of applications for various city offices were handed in to the Board but action was deferred." It was a pact between the leaders and the followers that after the election and coup, those who were most loyal and of greatest service to the Democratic cause would be repaid. *Morning Star* (Wilmington), November 15, 1898.

¹⁰³ Prather, *We Have Taken a City*, 144.